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Senators urge Obama to delay parts of health law

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Concerned Senate Democrats urged President Barack Obama to extend the enrollment period for his misfiring health care law, during a meeting at the White House on Wednesday.

The senators, some of whom face tough reelection fights next year, also asked the president to consider delaying the individual mandate—the rule that all Americans buy health insurance or pay a fine—following sign-up problems with the Obamacare website.

"We discussed a range of issues, and he really didn't take a position on them," Democratic Senator Jeanne Shaheen told AFP, and confirmed that enrollment and the individual mandate were brought up in the discussion between Obama and 16 Democratic senators.

Senator Jeff Merkley, meanwhile, told AFP that all the senators were "very concerned" that the website meant to sign up Americans to insurance exchanges had failed to debut well and was still not in full working order.

"I feel strongly that for every day the exchange doesn't work, we should extend the window of opportunity for folks to sign up," Merkley said.

The Obama administration has promised that the website glitches would be solved by the end of the month.

A White House readout of the meeting was less revealing than the one

provided by worried senators.

An official said Obama shares the commitment of senators to get enrollment running properly so people can access new insurance policies from the start date of January 1.

"The president also asked the senators for input on how implementation of the law is impacting their constituents, and expressed appreciation for their ongoing help to ensure the law works best for families and businesses and all Americans can take advantage of the benefits of the law," the official said.

Earlier on Wednesday, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius predicted "very low" early enrollment figures owing to the website troubles.

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